(c) the locations for hal-Imarking in Tamil Nadu?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Keeping in view the consumer interest and market demand, Hall-marking of Gold Jewellery was started in the year April, 2000 on a voluntary basis under Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Act, 1986. The scheme is aimed at providing third party assurance to consumers on the purity of gold for its fineness. The scheme is operated through network of Regional and Branch Offices of BIS all over the country. Since launch of the scheme, over 2438 gold jewellers have taken licence from BIS, and so far, over 162 lakh jewellery articles have been hall-marked. 40 hall-marking centres have been recognized for this purpose.

(c) There are 8 hall-marking centres in Tamil Nadu. The location of these centres is given below:

(i) Bharat Assayers, Chennai,

(ii) Kesar Hall-marking Centre, Chennai,

(iii) Shree Vishnu Assayers Pvt. Ltd., Chennai,

(iv) Shanti Vijay Testings, Chennai,

(v) Covai Hall-mark Company, Coimbatore,

(vi) Sukraa Hall-marking Centre, Coimbatore,

(vii) Krishna Hall-marking Centre Pvt. Ltd., Coimbatore,

(viii) Emerald Testings (India) Pvt. Ltd., Coimbatore.

Allocation of kerosene and wheat to Kerala

1848. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether quantity of kerosene allotted to PDS to Kerala had been reduced compared to the year 2002-03 and wheat allotted to PDS had been reduced drastically for 2006-07;

(b) if so, the reasons for the same;

(c) whether the competent authority of Kerala represented for increasing the quantity of kerosene and wheat; and

(d) if so, the details of action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Allotment of Kerosene under PDS:—As per the policy adopted by the Government of India, the Kerosene (SKO) allocation for distribution under the Public Distribution System (PDS) to various States/ Union Territories, including Kerala, was reduced every year beginning 2001-02 and upto 2004-05, taking into account the number of LPG connections released in each of the States/Union Territories.

The details of the quantity of PDS SKO allocated to the State of Kerala during the period from 2001-02 to till date are as under:—

Year	Quantity (In MTs)
2001-02	2,69,497
2002-03	2,36,758
2003-04	2,24,243
2004-05	2,11,033
2005-06	2,16,308
2006-07(April 06-December 06)	1,62,231

Allotment of wheat under PDS:—Keeping in view the reduced stock of wheat in th Central Pool, the Central Government has rationalized the allocation of wheat, in June 2006, for all States/UTs, including the State of Kerala, on the basis of each State's average offtake for the last 3 years or the last year's offtake, whichever was lower. A 25% cut on this has been imposed in respect of rice consuming States and Delhi for APL category. However, there has been no change in the overall entitlements and the State Governments/UTs can ask for allocation of rice in lieu of reduction of wheat allocation.

(c) and (d) Kerosene:—The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has received requests from various State Governments/Union Territories, including the Government to Kerala, for the enhancement of their SKO quota. In view of the requests received from various State Governments for

increasing the allocation, the Government of India commissioned the detailed study of Kerosene demand in the country, through the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in December 2004. The recommendations of NCAER have been received. Thereafter, the allocations for 2005-06 were maintained at the level of 2004-05 including additional allocations made during that year to meet emergency/urgent demands for PDS Kerosene in States/Union Territories. Allocations for the 1st, 2nd & 3rd quarter of 2006-07 have been maintained at the level of 2005-06.

Wheat:—The Central Government has received request from the State Government of Kerala for increasing the quantity of wheat. In view of improved stock position, the Central Government has made an additional allocation of 27,000 tonnes of APL wheat in four instalments for the months of September, October, November and December, 2006.

Export of rice from FCI godowns

1849. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that thousands or even lakhs of tonnes of rice is being illegally sourced and exported from FCI godowns;

(b) whether the same rice is meant for welfare schemes like Food for Work Programme;

(c) if so, Government's reaction thereto;and

(d) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (d) PDS is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments. The Central Government has taken the responsibility for procurement, storage, transportation upto the principal distribution centres of FCI and the State Government responsible for effectively distributing the same to the consumers through the network of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) lies with the State Governments. At present about 4.89 lakhs FPSs distribute foodgrains to Ration Card holders in the country. In such a vast network of PDS, the possibilities of irregularities in some cases/places can not be ruled out. Whenever Government receives